

FROM THE OFFICE OF

ROBERT A. LOVINGOOD

First District Supervisor, County of San Bernardino For information, contact Don Holland (760) 995-8100

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Board extends solar moratorium

On a 5-0 vote, the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors Tuesday extended a temporary moratorium on new commercial solar projects in unincorporated communities.

Following a 45-day moratorium passed June 12, the extension will allow county staff to revise design standards, siting criteria and land use compatibility for commercial solar projects.

First District Supervisor Robert Lovingood said solar projects already approved and in the pipeline will not be affected by the extension.

"I want to be clear, San Bernardino County welcomes renewable energy project applications," Lovingood said. "This extension is a balanced approach that will enable the county to protect property owners and set fair ground rules that solar developers can live with."

Recognizing the urgency of the issue, Lovingood asked that county staff complete the draft solar amendment in three to six months and to provide updates to the Board every 30 days. The Board of Supervisors could lift the moratorium before the extension runs out in 10 months and 15 days.

The extension is aimed at protecting rural neighborhoods from solar projects which can hurt property values, create dust, blight, glare and generally can be an eyesore. The county's development code currently allows commercial solar projects in rural residential neighborhoods.

Residents from around the High Desert have grown increasingly concerned about mixing industrial solar projects in rural residential neighborhoods. The solar issue has become a hot issue in the Morongo Basin as well.

Third District Supervisor James Ramos said adding a renewable energy component to the County's General Plan is crucial.

"The current plan is nearly silent on renewable energy and the development code permits solar projects to back up against residential areas in the unincorporated parts of the County. We need the next three to six months to properly plan for the impact these solar projects have on the rural communities of our County." Ramos said.

Emails from the public have overwhelmingly supported the extension. And 28 members of the public signed up to speak during Tuesday's Board of Supervisors meeting, nearly all in support of the extension. Some speakers addressed the Board of Supervisors from teleconferencing centers in Hesperia and Yucca Valley.

After hearing from the public, Lovingood noted he is sensitive to the county's jobs outlook.

"With the number of solar projects we currently have underway, I think there is little impact or threat to the long-term opportunity for jobs while we go through this process."